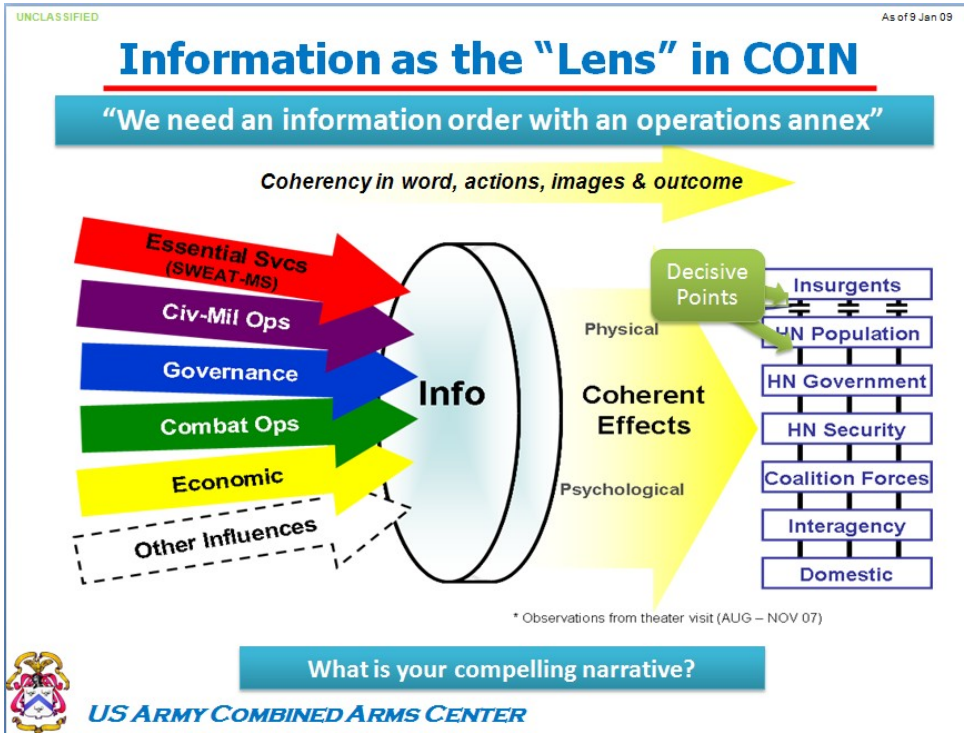
Information Engagement in Counterinsurgency

Agenda

- IE Goals
- IE Fundamentals in COIN
- IE Vacuum
- Success vs. Failure
- IE Task Categories
- IE in the AO

Perceptions are Everything



7 Children Killed in Coalition Airstrike on Religious Compound in Afghanistan

By BARRY BEARAK AND TAIMOOR SHAH; C. J. CHIVERS AND ABDUL WAHEED WAFA CONTRIBUTED REPORTING.
Published: June 19, 2007

Seven children were killed during an airstrike by the United States-led coalition against a religious compound thought to be a Qaeda sanctuary in remote eastern Afghanistan, the coalition said Monday.

E-MAIL
PRINT
SINGLE-PA
SAVE
SHARE

"We need an information order with an operations annex"

IE Goals

The desired effects of IE are to destroy, degrade, disrupt, deny, deceive, exploit, and influence enemy actions and enhance the legitimacy of the host nation government.

IE Goals

- Divide, disorganize, and induce defection of insurgents
- Reduce/eliminate *civilian support* of insurgents
- Dissuade *civilians* from insurgent activities
- Win the active support of *non-committed civilians*
- Preserve and strengthen the support of *friendly civilians*
- Win popular approval *(from the civilians)* of the local presence of friendly military forces
- Obtain national unity or disunity *(within the civilian population)* as desired

IE Goals

In COIN, influencing the population is more important than controlling land

Imperatives of IE in COIN

- Prepare for IE before deployment
- Involve every soldier
- Anticipate and respond with speed, accuracy, and truth
- Establish and sustain an integrated team approach
- Intelligence supports IE
- IE supports intelligence

Holistic IE Principles in COIN

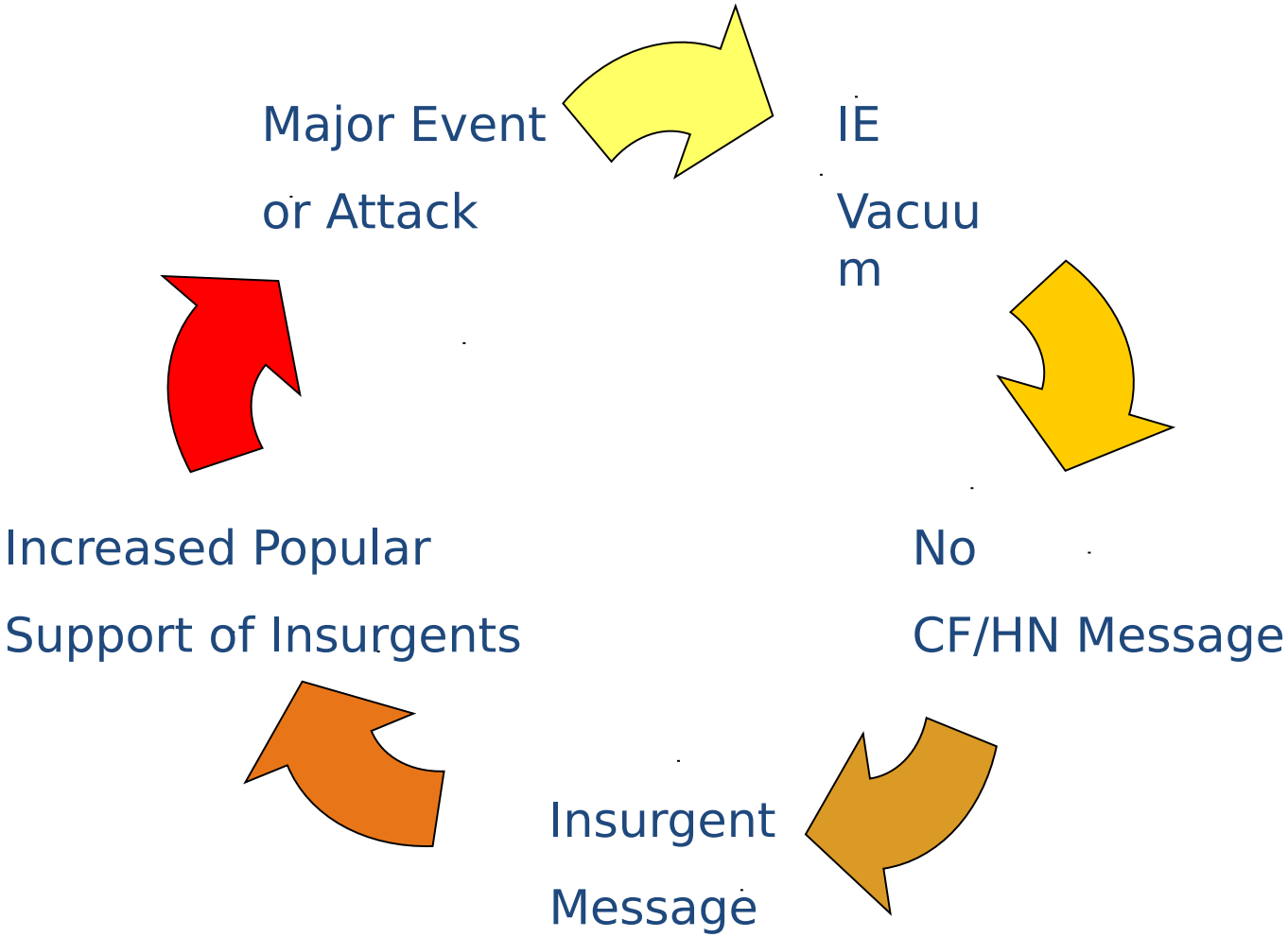
IE is tied to every aspect of COIN

- FID (Foreign Internal Defense)
- CMO (Civilian-Military Operations)
- Force Protection
- Population Security
- Lethal Ops
- INTEL

Plan for Contingencies

Every Operation is an Information Engagement

IE Vacuum



Get inside the insurgent media loop!

Effective Communication

You can be transmitting, but are you being received?

Political vs. Military Mobilization

- Insurgent/Extremists failure to achieve classic "military objectives" should not be interpreted as a failure to accomplish the "mission."
  - Tet Offensive in Vietnam
  - Intifada I
  - "Final Offensive" in El Salvador
  - Spectacular Attacks in Iraq
  - Serena Hotel Attack in Kabul
  - Hizbollah vs. Israel – 2006

- Of note, these examples shared characteristics of a possible outcome in Iraq or Afghanistan:
  - All were failures militarily
  - All were victories psychologically and politically
  - The psychological and political goals were ultimately more important than military objectives

Impact of Attacks and IE Factor

- Media coverage and public outcry following spectacular and widespread attacks will stimulate insurgents' efforts

- Impact of spectacular attacks by insurgents:
  - Magnifies the group's effort
  - International and domestic press coverage
  - Damage government credibility
  - Impact public and political support in the US and Coalition countries
  - Reduce counterinsurgent morale

Information Engagement Officer

"Designated IE Officer assists the staff in integrating IE into each COA. The IE officer addresses how each IE element supports each COA and its associated time lines, critical events, and decision points. The IE officer revises IE concepts of support as needed during war gaming."

– *FM 5-0, Planning and Orders Production, JAN 05*

Divisive IE

Political, social, economic, and ideological differences among insurgent elements

Leadership rivalries within insurgent movement

Insurgents as criminals, inept, anti-values

Danger of betrayal from among the insurgents

Harsh living conditions of insurgents

Selfish motivation of opportunists supporting the insurgents

Foreign domination of the movement

IE That Counters Insurgent IE

- Proactive campaign, projected by the host nation, themselves designed to neutralize the psychological impact of future attacks
- Acknowledge the possibility/likelihood of future spectacular attacks
- The three pillars of MNF/ITG/ISF IE should be insurgents, especially Islamic extremist who:
  - Lead **Criminal** attacks against host nation
  - Have **Foreign** ties and leadership
  - And are **Ineptitude**
- Ridicule can be very powerful, particularly against insurgent recruitment

Psychological Operations

"Few insurgencies have been won or lost by large, decisive military battles. More commonly, insurgencies are won by a combination of military and political means. Much of the political leverage involved in such settlements is derived from effective psychological operations, which have structured the environment necessary for a political solution."

-DA Pam 500-104

Targets of Psychological Operations

PSYOP can assist counterinsurgency by reaching the following targets:

- Insurgents
- Civilian Populace (US & HN)
- Military Force
- Neutral Elements
- External Hostile Powers
- Local Government

Conduct of Troops During Operations

Rules of Conduct:

There shall be no confiscation whatever from the poor peasantry.

1. If you borrow anything, return it.
2. Replace all articles you damage.
3. Pay fairly for everything that you purchase.
4. Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
5. Be courteous and polite to the people and help them when you can.

— Mao Tse-tung, 1928

Conduct of Troops During Operations

Effective IE means

- Be Timely
- Integrate with all phases of combat operations
- Use host nation to spread message
- Decentralize to lowest levels
- Understand host nation culture/customs

Every Soldier, a Spokesperson

IE Best Practices (1 of 2)

- Ensure IE is synchronized at all levels.
- Identify all audiences, the news cycles and how to reach them.
- Manage local populace's expectations of successful COIN.
- Develop common, multiechelon themes consistent with HN polices and operation's objectives.
- Coordinate and provide a comprehensive assessment of the IE environment.
- Remember - actions speak louder than words.
- Work to establish and sustain transparency to help maintain HN government legitimacy.

IE Best Practices (2 of 2)

- Success or failure depends *on* coordinated and thought out IE plan
- Recognize that COIN is both physical and psychological
- IE effort begins before the attacks occur
- Pre-Screen IE products (via host nation or interpreters)
- IE effort propagated at *ALL* levels –train your soldiers for “street” IE
- Train and empower host nation counterparts to become the main IE effort
- Well-synchronized offensive IE can cripple insurgent armed forces and insurgent political decision making capabilities

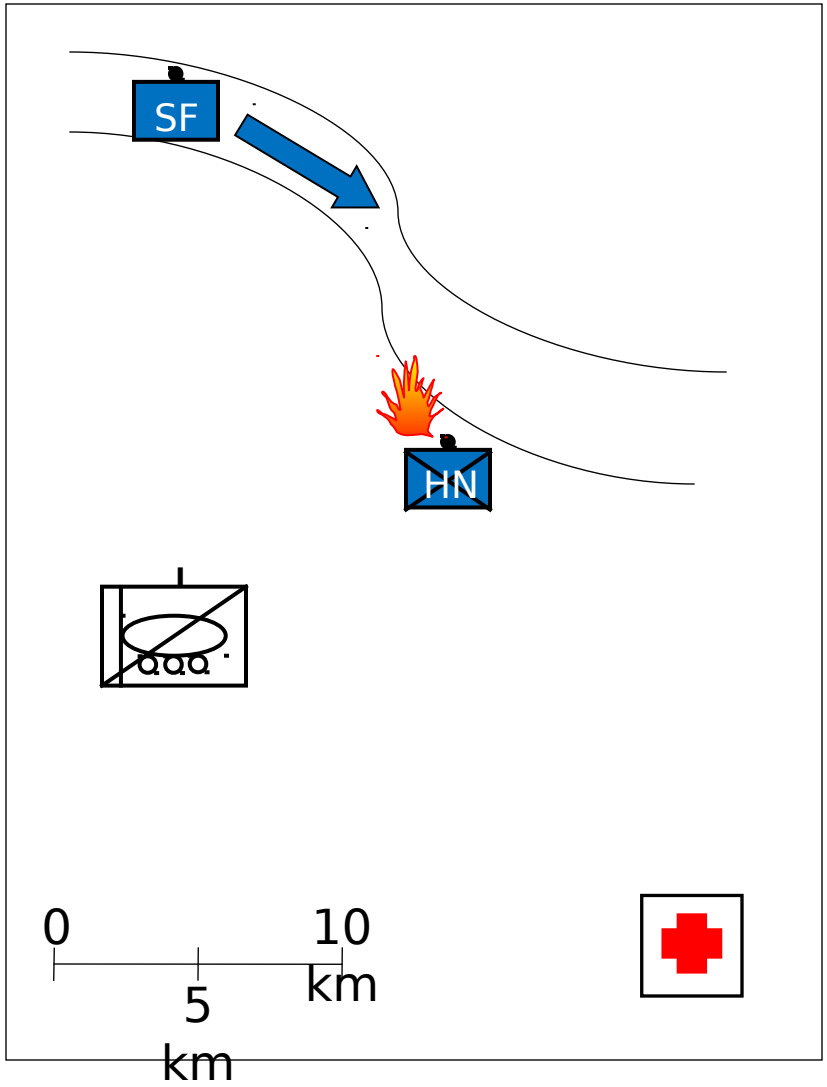
Questions?

Consequence Management

Tactical Decision Game

Scenario

Without effective coordination with your land-owning unit, a river-borne special operations force has engaged in a friendly-on-friendly firefight with a host nation security force (HNSF) patrol providing overwatch of the river. The firefight involved close air support; there were no US casualties, but three HNSF personnel were killed and two critically wounded. How do you react?



Video: Consequence Management